

The modern CIO's strategic guide to successful vendor transitions



This report was conducted by iResearch Services
in partnership with Pure Storage®.

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This research surveyed 500 technology decision-makers across North America and EMEA who completed vendor transitions within the past three years.

Introduction

The technology turning point

Let's start with the obvious: we're in the middle of a technological realignment. The confluence of artificial intelligence demands, cloud-optimized platforms, and business-critical tools is rewriting the rules of tech infrastructure, and virtually every organization faces a fundamental choice about how to curate their technology to meet the demands of these new realities.

This places CIOs at the center of perhaps the most critical strategic decision their organizations will make in years. And the most successful CIOs view this decision as an inflection point: they recognize it as an opportunity to use it as a catalyst to reshape their technology ecosystem and transition from reactive maintenance to proactive market leadership.

But we're not talking about disruption for disruption's sake. We're talking about strategic evolution backed by evidence; making intentional, data-driven vendor changes that align your technology foundation with your business goals. And the data is clear: 84% of organizations that comprehensively planned their vendor transitions found their expectations were met or exceeded. These aren't outliers or lucky breaks—these are the results of thoughtful, well-executed strategies that others can look to as a road map for success.

For years, conventional wisdom favored the status quo. Operations could be managed “well enough” through incremental improvements and stopgap solutions that accumulated substantial tech debt. But today's environment is different. Next-generation computing, real-time processing demands, and complex cybersecurity requirements have significantly undermined the ability to progress with traditional approaches and band-aid solutions. Current systems cannot sustain existing needs—let alone support future demands—in the same way, and organizations can't invest in tomorrow if they're still paying for yesterday's limitations.

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Part I

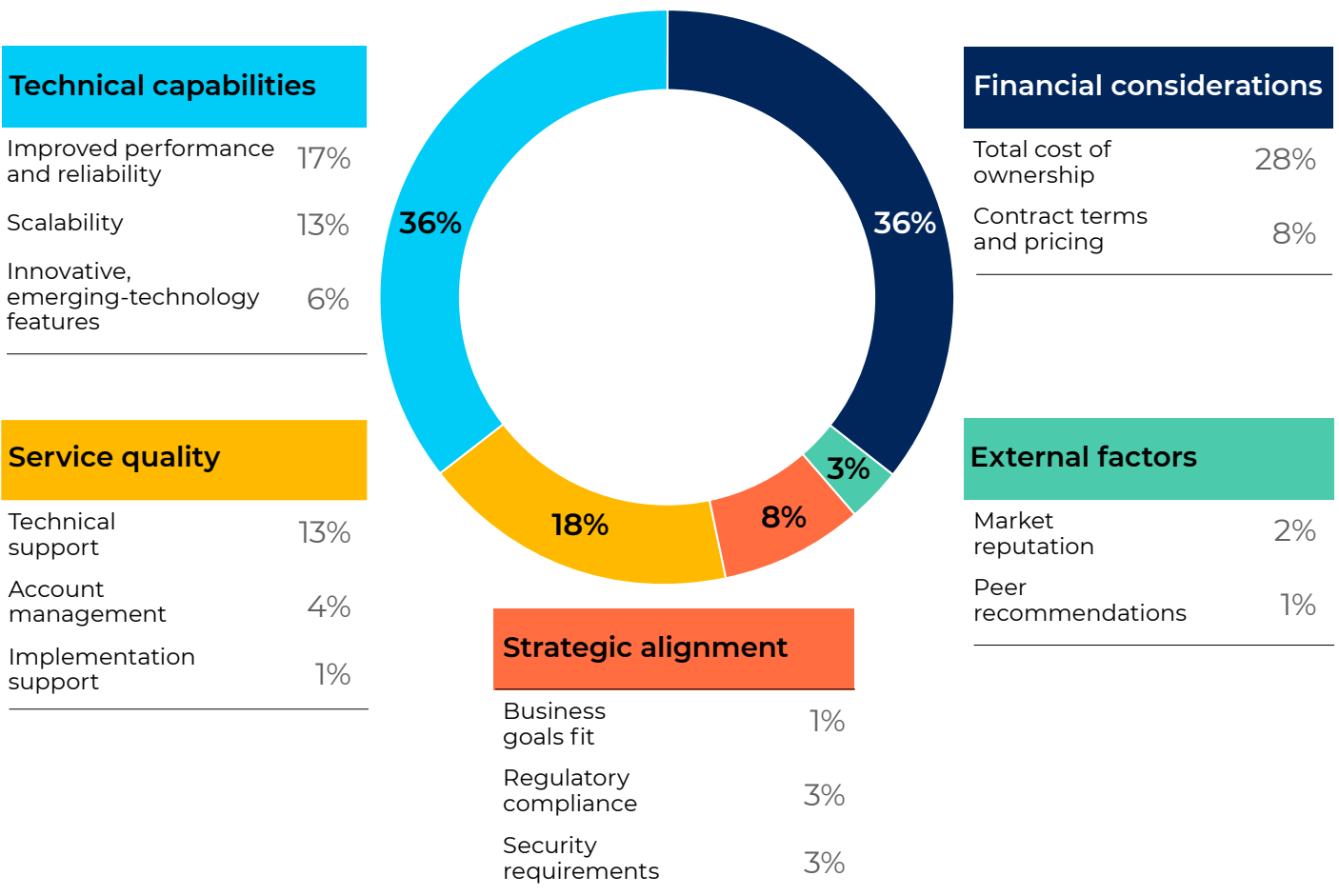
Catalysts for change

The first question: how do you break free from past constraints and start building future foundations? Vendor change isn't only a technology decision—it's a holistic business transformation that requires aligning multiple stakeholders around shared objectives. Successful vendor changes don't happen in isolation. When organizations make the switch, their primary drivers are split: 36% prioritize technical capabilities and 36% point to financial considerations, signaling that leaders must move beyond siloed priorities for smooth transitions (Figure 1).

Figure 1

CHANGING VENDORS

What were the primary reasons for switching vendors?



Notes: n = 500; single-select response. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: iResearch Services + Pure Storage CIO Vendor Switch Survey, Q2 2025

The importance of cross-functional alignment becomes even more apparent when examining who influences decision-making. Our research reveals that while IT teams are the most likely to be the decision-makers (86%), both Finance and Procurement teams, as well as Security teams, also have a major influence in the vendor change process (79% and 76%, respectively). These teams influence key factors such as risk mitigation and compliance requirements, cost control, and long-term viability, making them natural allies for IT leaders navigating vendor transitions. And with influence levels this close, effective vendor changes aren't just IT decisions with cursory input from other teams—they are collaborative, strategic initiatives built on multi-departmental participation from day one.

Part II

From obstacles to opportunities

The importance of collaboration increases when you consider that 70% of organizations experience some kind of operational impact during vendor transitions. The challenges are multifaceted, but they can also be anticipated, meaning that with the right planning and stakeholder alignment, potential hurdles become very manageable milestones. Understanding the landscape of these challenges is the first step in overcoming them, and they often surface at the start of the new vendor evaluation process.

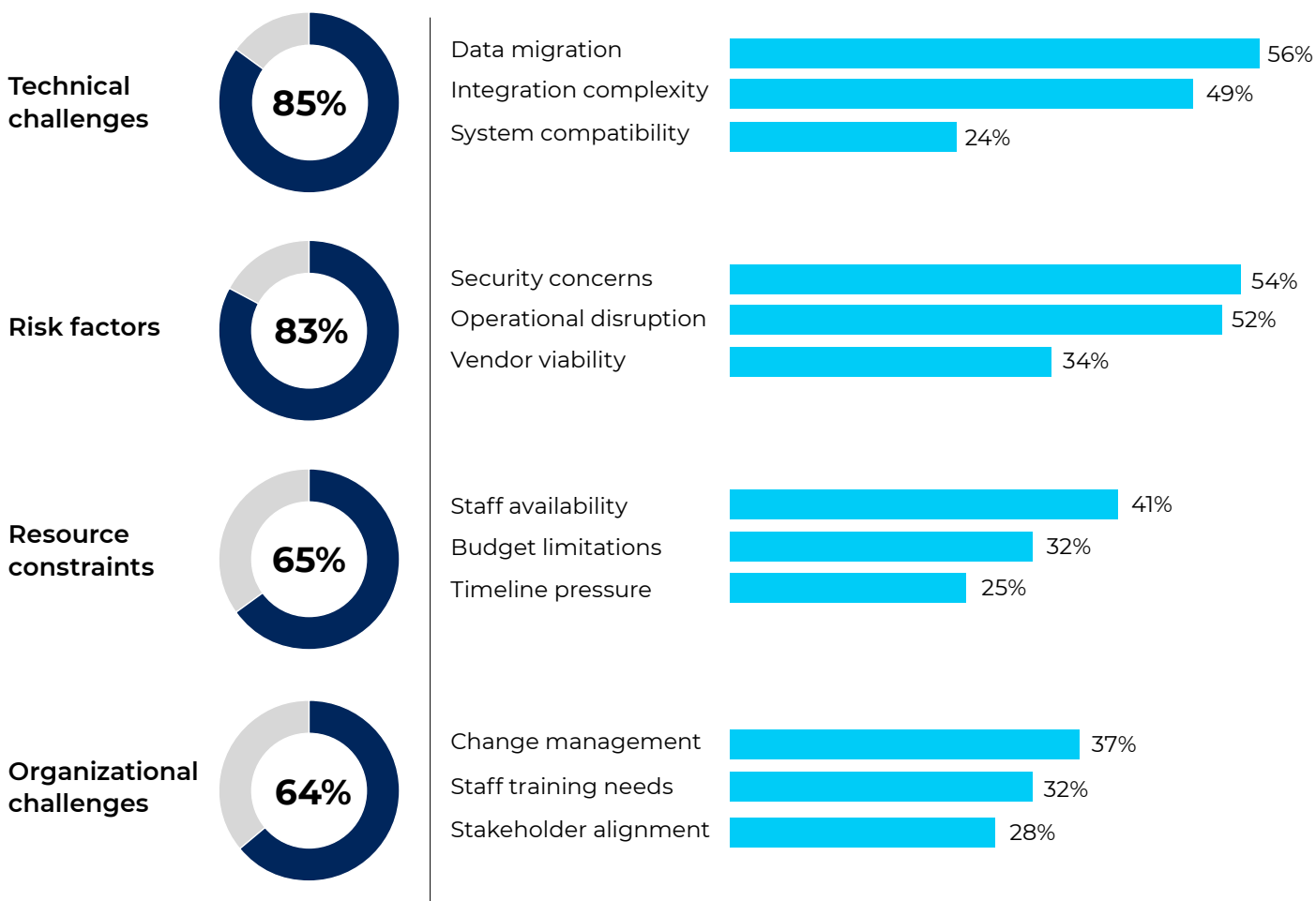
According to our research, the most significant challenges center around technical implementation (85%) and risk management (83%). Respondents also report concerns around resource constraints (65%), including budget limitations, and organizational challenges (64%), such as change management, as likely problem areas (Figure 2).

Within the technical challenges category, data migration (56%) and integration complexity (49%) rank at the top. In terms of risk management, security concerns (54%) and operational disruption (52%) are the biggest challenges respondents face. Again, the survey results reinforce that organizational challenges are central to the vendor evaluation process.

Figure 2

ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

What challenges did you face when evaluating new vendors?



Notes: n = 500; multiselect response.

Source: iResearch Services + Pure Storage CIO Vendor Switch Survey, Q2 2025

These interconnected concerns confirm what we know: operational impacts are commonplace. But rather than being paralyzed by the prospect of operational disruption, you can turn preparation into your secret weapon: when you know what to expect, you can develop strategies to address your pain points before they become persistent problems.

Part III

The proven playbook

So, how do you leverage preparation to ensure smooth transitions? Our research reveals four essential practices that successful organizations consistently rely on to achieve seamless vendor switches.

1 Work backward from problems

The most successful transitions follow a “bottom-up” approach: expect operational impacts, map out possible risks in advance, and build targeted mitigation strategies for each scenario. Almost two-thirds (65%) of organizations that successfully navigated vendor evaluation challenges used detailed risk assessments and mitigation plans to do so, proving that working backward from potential problems is essential in comprehensively preparing for a successful transition.

2 Bring your team along, but own the decision

Remember that collaborative imperative? Well, it *is* crucial for success, but there's also an important distinction between involving stakeholders and crowdsourcing responsibility. Leadership requires making informed decisions without consensus-building paralysis. Sometimes, you have to recognize that you're making a potentially unpopular choice for the greater good.

But remember, this is okay! Good, even. Why? For one: You've planned for it. Two: By embracing the collaborative spirit from the start, you create the conditions for stakeholder buy-in even when the final call is yours alone. This is why 55% of organizations that successfully overcame vendor evaluation challenges used cross-functional evaluation teams. These evaluation teams provide input and expertise while allowing you to maintain decisive leadership and clear communication. And three: you build a foundation of trust by investing in transparency and capability building. Let's face it, when you move away from an incumbent vendor that's been part of your organization for years (our research shows that on average 56% of applications have been in use for 6 years or more), there's bound to be some personal pushback. A certain level of resistance—even hostility—is a natural part of the decision-making process. The same organizations that successfully navigated vendor

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transitions prioritized transparent communication about decision rationale (72%), paired with training and upskilling programs (79%) to transform potential resistance into active buy-in.

A not-so-sidebar: The investment in human capital is just as important as investing in technology itself. Streamlined transitions aren't just about choosing the right vendor—they're about ensuring your team can flourish after that choice is made. When you're driving major decisions from the top, a key aspect of your success depends on having a team that understands, trusts, and can execute on your vision, making a foundation of confidence an insurance policy of sorts come implementation time.

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3 Firm up on financial flexibility

Protecting against financial surprises is smart business under any circumstances, but in this era of economic uncertainty, it's a no-brainer. The most effective organizations understand this, and 43% of those that have navigated a vendor transition in the past three years negotiated flexible contract terms to safeguard against unexpected cost fluctuations and market turbulence.

This financial flexibility drives two key shifts: adopting an as-a-service model that enables agile business changes without delay or overhead, and transitioning to locked-in, consumption-based pricing that improves forecasting and shields your business from unexpected costs, such as price hikes and tariffs. Instead of capital investments in

hardware arrays, you're entering service agreements that offer predictable spend and long-term financial stability.

And as thrilled as your Finance and Procurement teams will be about potential cost control, the strategic advantage goes deeper. Financial agility frees you to focus on innovation rather than constantly managing budget surprises and cost overruns. This is where vendor transitions become particularly powerful: they create natural opportunities to renegotiate terms that no longer serve your organization. Vendors competing for your business will often offer flexible structures that your current provider won't consider, so let

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them woo you! The question is not whether you can afford to make these changes, but whether you can afford not to.

4 Choose the right partner

Simply put, a vendor's migration expertise matters as much—if not more—than their features list. With data migration topping technical concerns at 56%, and integration complexity close behind at 49%, CIOs need partners who view seamless transitions as a core competency, not an afterthought.

Look for vendors whose migration and risk management capabilities match (or exceed) their technical offerings. Leaders seeking to advance during their vendor transition require a partner that can transfer their data without the operational disruption that concerns over half of the organizations. You want vendors that have a dedicated transitions service, because it can't simply be an add-on when your business continuity is on the line.


Remember: ultimately, you want to make this the last time you'll need to manage such a complex transformation. Choosing adaptable platforms or partners that can evolve with your needs—rather than requiring you to develop around their constraints—both eliminates today's challenges and allows you to grow without being bound by outdated infrastructure.

Conclusion

Success starts with strategy

There has never been a better time to strategically navigate vendor change. Today's nexus of technological transformation, proven methodologies, and competitive market dynamics has created ideal conditions for organizations to not just modernize their infrastructure but establish lasting competitive advantages.

The approach is straightforward: work backward from problems, strike a balance between collaboration and authority, negotiate financial flexibility, and prioritize migration expertise. These are the proven practices that separate the organizations that succeed during vendor changes from those that merely survive them.

Fellow technology leaders have already demonstrated that vendor change, when appropriately executed, delivers results. That leaves only one question: Will you lead the transformation, or be forced to follow it? 



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